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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Food Safety and Inspection Service**

[Docket No. 98-045N2]

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**Food and Drug Administration**

[Docket No. 98N-1230]

Egg Safety Action Plan; Public Meeting

AGENCIES: Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA; Food and Drug Administration, HHS.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) are announcing a public meeting to discuss the development of an action plan to address the presence of *Salmonella enteritidis* (SE) in shell eggs and egg products using a farm-to-table approach. The purpose of the action plan is: To promote the implementation of existing technologies, to control and prevent, to the extent possible, the presence of pathogens, particularly SE, in shell eggs and egg products, in order to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness; to examine alternative regulatory inspection structures to better coordinate the government's egg safety efforts from farm-to-table; to change, through education, unsafe egg handling practices by producers, distributors, retailers, and consumers, in part, by eliminating temperature abuse as required by FDA's proposed and USDA's final rules; and to identify and develop new technologies to ensure safer shell eggs and egg products through research. FDA and FSIS have established public dockets to receive comments about the egg safety action plan.

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DATES: The meeting will be held on Thursday, August 26, 1999, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Comments should be submitted to one of the dockets no later than September 11, 1999, to be considered in the development of the egg safety action plan.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Washington Plaza Hotel, 10 Thomas Circle, NW., Massachusetts Ave. and 14th St., Washington, DC. Thirty rooms have been blocked off at the government rate of \$115 for a single under reference #8613. To guarantee a room with a credit card, call the hotel at 800-424-1140 or 202-842-1300.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

For registration: Sheila A. Johnson, FSIS, 202-501-7305 or FAX 202-501-7642. Persons requiring a sign language interpreter or other special accommodations should call by August 19, 1999.

For general information: Stephanie A. Smith, FDA, 202-205-0136 or FAX 202-205-4422, or Alice Thaler, FSIS, 202-690-2683.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

The President's Council on Food Safety was established in August 1998 under Executive Order 13100 to strengthen and focus our efforts to coordinate food safety policy and resources. The Council on Food Safety was charged with developing a comprehensive, long-range strategic plan that can be used to set priorities, improve coordination and efficiency, identify gaps in the current system and how to fill those gaps, enhance and strengthen prevention and intervention strategies, and identify or develop measures to show progress.

On July 1, 1999, FDA and FSIS testified before the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, Restructuring, and the District of Columbia. The hearing explored concerns raised by an U.S. General Accounting Office report (GAO/RCED-99-184) relating to the Federal Government's current approach to shell eggs and egg products safety. During the hearing, the agencies committed to developing an action plan in

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120 days to address the presence of SE in shell eggs and egg products using a farm-to-table approach. As part of the action plan development process, FDA and FSIS will hold a public meeting on August 26, 1999.

FDA and FSIS, in conjunction with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Agricultural Marketing Service, the Agricultural Research Service, and the Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service, have already begun the process of developing an egg safety action plan by participating in interagency sessions. The purpose of the August 26, 1999, public meeting is to obtain stakeholder input on the draft goals, as well as on the development of the objectives and action items. The meeting is intended to be a working meeting, with breakout sessions, in order to provide the stakeholders in attendance the opportunity to offer comments and suggestions. Therefore, the agenda will include brief informational presentations to provide: (1) Background to individuals unfamiliar with the relevant issues, and (2) breakout sessions to facilitate public participation. The breakout sessions will be organized around the draft goals and will include members of the interagency planning workgroups to lead and facilitate discussions. Discussion summaries will be available within 30 days of the meeting. The draft goals for the egg safety action plan to be discussed at the meeting are as follows:

- Overarching Goal: To protect public health by significantly reducing the number of foodborne illnesses associated with SE in shell eggs and egg products through science-based and coordinated regulation, inspection, enforcement, research, and education programs.
- Goal 1: To promote the implementation of existing technologies, to control and prevent, to the extent possible, the presence of pathogens, particularly SE, in shell eggs and egg products, in order to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness;
- Goal 2: To examine alternative regulatory inspection structures to better coordinate the government's egg safety efforts from farm-to-table;

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- Goal 3: To change, through education, unsafe egg handling practices by producers, distributors, retailers, and consumers, in part, by eliminating temperature abuse as required by FDA's proposed and USDA's final rules; and
- Goal 4: To identify and develop new technologies to ensure safer shell eggs and egg products through research.

Because the interagency workgroups will continue revising these goals and will begin developing objectives and action items in preparation for the August 26, 1999, meeting, the material distributed at the meeting may differ slightly from the information provided in this document.

II. Public Dockets and Submission of Comments

The agencies have established public dockets to which comments may be submitted. Comments should be directed either to FSIS, Docket No. 98-045N2, or to FDA, Docket No. 98N-1230, and all comments must include a docket number. Submit a disk with the written comments in WordPerfect 5.1/6.1 or ASCII file format. Submit written comments in triplicate to:

USDA/FSIS Hearing Clerk, 300 12th St. SW., rm. 102 Cotton Annex, Washington, DC 20250-3700.

FDA/Dockets Management Branch (HFA-305), 5630 Fishers Lane, rm. 1061, Rockville, MD 20852.

Alternatively, comments may be submitted electronically to "fdadockets@oc.fda.gov". Electronic comments must be submitted as an ASCII file avoiding the use of special characters and any form of encryption.

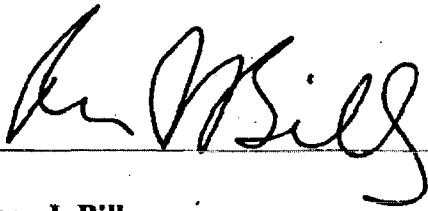
III. Meeting Summaries

Summaries of the public meeting will be posted on the Internet at "www.foodsafety.gov". This website is a joint FDA, USDA, and Environmental Protection Agency food safety home page. It is linked to each agency for persons seeking additional food safety information. Summaries of the public meeting may also be requested in writing from the Dockets Management Branch (address

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above) approximately 30 business days after the meeting at a cost of 10 cents per page. The summaries of the public meeting will be available for public examination at the Docket Management Branch between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Dated: August 10, 1999



Thomas J. Billy,

Administrator, Food Safety and Inspection Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.



William K. Hubbard,

Senior Associate Commissioner for Policy, Planning, and Legislation, Food and Drug Administration.

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Food Safety & Inspection Service**